

A GENDERED BLOGOSPHERE? PORTRAYAL OF SARAH PALIN ON POLITICAL BLOGS DURING THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

By Amy M. Bradley and Robert H. Wicks

This case study explores gender stereotyping by comparing the ways in which vice presidential candidates Sarah Palin and Joe Biden were portrayed on Internet blogs. Results suggest Palin did not suffer from a lack of attention. While she did receive a considerable amount of coverage focusing on her personality and personal life in comparison to Democratic candidate Joe Biden, that was likely a result of her unique candidacy and persona. Perhaps most important, the blogs did not play to traditional gender stereotypes concerning issue coverage even as a stereotypically male issue dominated the political agenda.



The 2008 presidential election was the first in U.S. history to feature both a viable female candidate for the top spot in Democrat Hillary Clinton and a vice presidential candidate in Sarah Palin on the Republican ticket. The Democratic primary between Barack Obama and Clinton was so close that officials meticulously counted votes even into the month of June. Presumptive Republican presidential candidate John McCain announced his decision to place Palin on the ticket on August 29, 2008, making her only the second woman to be tapped by a major political party.¹ In announcing his decision, McCain declared, “she’s exactly who this country needs to help me fight the same old Washington politics of ‘me first and the country second.’”²

Although neither Clinton nor Palin prevailed in 2008, their achievements both as women and as political candidates in this historic race drew widespread attention not only from voters and the media, but from scholars as well. The news media remained fixated on these two women even after the election was over, ranking them as the second- and third-leading newsmakers for the week of November 10 to 16.³ Much of this attention originated from the notion that women are fundamentally different from men and somehow “unnatural” in the public sphere⁴ and that, as a result, the press frequently reports on women candidates as anomalies. At the core of these criticisms is the idea that the

Amy M. Bradley is a doctoral student in the Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana State University; and Robert H. Wicks is a professor in the Department of Communication, University of Arkansas. Research was supported by the Center for Communication and Media Research at the University of Arkansas.

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private and public spheres are at odds with each other. A review of gender stereotype literature examining expectations of the personality traits of men and women concludes that women are associated with communal traits (e.g., caring, nurturing, warm), while agentic traits (e.g., competent, successful, cunning) are associated with men.⁵ Further, in the vein of social learning theory, Eagly's social role theory suggests that strong cultural elements perpetuate these personality differences as both men and women adopt sex-linked traits, skills, and interests in order to fulfill the gender roles in which they are placed.⁶

Therefore, political women face the no-win situation of being either warm and womanly or competent and masculine.⁷ In other words, they must choose between highlighting their communal traits and running as nurturing candidates or emphasizing agentic traits and running as strong equals to their male counterparts. While running "as a woman" can provide some advantages for women candidates when women's issues are at the top of the agenda,⁸ it can also disadvantage women by presenting them as too soft, especially when running for an office as masculinized as the presidency.⁹ Alternatively, emphasizing agentic traits can disadvantage women by stripping them of their femininity. As Lawrence and Rose eloquently assert, "a female candidate who seems unwomanly may be profoundly disconcerting to a public still influenced by deeply rooted notions of the qualities each gender 'should' display."¹⁰

Whichever portrayal of woman a candidate chooses to adopt will also undoubtedly affect the media coverage of her candidacy. For decades, studies of traditional news coverage of women running for political office have found significant differences in the way men and women candidates are treated, including amount of coverage, types of issues covered, and disproportionate focus on personal qualities rather than issues.

To advance this literature, we consider whether this pattern holds with respect to blogs, an increasingly important communication vehicle during elections. We consider reporting and commentary on ten politically oriented blogs during the 2008 campaign season. The analysis commenced following the nominations of Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin and her Democratic counterpart, Sen. Joe Biden, at their respective party conventions. We specifically analyzed how coverage of the two vice presidential candidates was similar and how it was different.

To do so, we evaluated (1) the incidence of unique candidate mentions on the blogs; (2) the type of issue commentary and coverage related to the candidates on the specified blogs; and (3) the incidence of personal commentary and coverage versus the incidence of issue commentary and coverage on the specified blogs. By evaluating reporting and commentary on the blogs about these candidates, we hope to further advance the discussion regarding whether coverage of women candidates is inherently different from coverage of men candidates at the vice presidential level.

Literature Review

Women versus Men as Political Candidates. We examine political blog commentary and reporting in this study because blogs are one form of new media that continues to gain momentum as important news sources consumed by the public.¹¹ Because blog content is a mixture of

news coverage and the blogger's personal commentary, the analyzed content is referred to as commentary and coverage. Blogs have become so popular that they now are a key part of every presidential campaign communication strategy.¹² The latest statistics from Pew Research Center on blogging stated that in July 2008, 33% of Internet users (the equivalent of 24% of all adults) said they read blogs, with 11% doing so on a daily basis. Further, 42% of Internet users (representing 32% of all adults) said they had *at some point* read a blog.¹³

Psychological research on stereotypes concludes that people revert to relying on stereotypes when they have little other information on which to base their judgments.¹⁴ Paxton and Hughes assert that the political sphere "remains an arena where women have far to go"¹⁵ and that "the lack of visible women...suggests that veiled discrimination against women remains."¹⁶ Contributing to this is the mass media coverage that women politicians receive. Differences in media coverage may contribute to the lack of women in politics as gender stereotypes are often bolstered by media coverage of women candidates.¹⁷

While coverage of gubernatorial candidates contained no gender differences in the incidence of coverage the candidates received,¹⁸ Kahn repeatedly found that in senatorial races women candidates received significantly less coverage than their male counterparts.¹⁹ Research has documented these differences in studies of presidential races as well.²⁰ This occurred even when the woman candidate was consistently ranked ahead of the male candidate in early primary polls.²¹

In an examination of five consecutive presidential elections, Kiouisis and McCombs²² found a strong correlation between the amount of coverage that presidential candidates received and the proportion of people with an opinion about those candidates. Therefore, incidence of coverage received is important to address not only because women have consistently received less coverage than men in political campaigns, but also because more coverage may influence public opinion of a candidate. This study measures incidence of coverage received by tallying the number of times each candidate was mentioned throughout the sample and considers differences in the incidence of unique mentions of Palin and Biden on selected blogs:

RQ1: Was there a difference in the incidence of unique mentions received by the vice presidential candidates on the selected blogs in the 2008 campaign?

Election Issue versus Personal Issue Commentary and Coverage. Although Smith's²³ research suggests that gender-based coverage may have diminished in the 1990s, most other research shows that media report on the personal aspects of women (e.g., appearance, relationships, age, and personality) more frequently.²⁴ When the press spends time and effort reporting such trivial details about women candidates, it may detract from coverage of more serious news items like a woman's political stance on policy issues, leaving voters ill-equipped to make informed voting decisions.

Multiple studies conclude that women receive significantly less election issue-based coverage than do their male counterparts.²⁵ This occurs even though women are more likely to make issues the cornerstones of their campaigns.²⁶ The literature also reinforces the idea that there are specific “male” and “female” issues in politics.²⁷ Huddy and Terkildsen²⁸ suggest that voters view women as better able to handle “feminine” issues such as health care and education, while men are seen as more competent to handle “masculine” issues such as security, war, and the economy. More recently, Lawless²⁹ studied the impact of these stereotypes when “male” issues dominated the political climate. She found that after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, during a time dominated by foreign policy concerns and the war on terror, support for women candidates dropped significantly. Respondents to her survey were less likely to support a qualified woman candidate, indicating that support for women candidates may be conditional on which issues dominate the campaign agenda. Recent research finds that people continue to hold gender stereotypes regarding issues for men and women candidates.³⁰

The present study evaluates the personal-based commentary and coverage that Palin received on the selected political blogs:

RQ2a: Was there a difference in the incidence of personal commentary and coverage received by the vice presidential candidates on the blogs in the 2008 campaign?

RQ2b: Which personal issues or attributes were most frequently mentioned for each vice presidential candidate on the blogs in the 2008 campaign?

We also evaluate the election issue-based commentary and coverage that Palin received on the selected political blogs:

RQ3a: Was there a difference in the incidence of election commentary and coverage received by the vice presidential candidates on the blogs in the 2008 campaign?

RQ3b: Will the selected blogs play to gender stereotypes by emphasizing “male” issues for men candidates and “female” issues for women candidates?

Tone of Coverage. In addition, this study evaluates the tone of the blog coverage to determine whether the presence of sex stereotypes results in more negative or more positive evaluations of women candidates. Kahn found that the media reinforced these stereotypes in the 1980s and 1990s.³¹ In her study, Kahn operationalized tone in the context of coverage characteristics as being positive, negative, neutral, or a mixture. Furthermore, Lawrence and Rose defined negative coverage as “content or tone that criticizes the candidate or paints her character, her policy positions, or her campaign tactics in an unflattering light.”³²

This study addresses negative coverage with the following research question:

RQ4: Did a difference exist in the tone of unique mentions received by the vice presidential candidates on the selected blogs in the 2008 campaign?

Method

A research team modified a codebook originally developed for a research project conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs in 1996.³³ The unit of analysis is the blog post, and the categories and operational definitions used to code the posts were similar to those used to code the content of the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaign websites.

The population of interest consisted of ten political blogs in which a main focus was politics and the 2008 presidential election (see Table 1). Naturally, the blogs contained on the four politically aligned websites were included.

In addition, politically non-aligned blogs were included. Initially, the team examined information presented on websites that track blog content, such as Technorati (www.technorati.com), tailrank (www.tailrank.com), and blogpulse (www.blogpulse.com). Three blogs were selected that were repeatedly designated as blogs of “authority” on Technorati. Specifically, these blogs were Markos Moulitsas’ liberal *Daily Kos*, the conservative *Michelle Malkin* blog, and Andrew Sullivan’s independent *The Daily Dish*.³⁴

Because the campaign included an African American and a woman candidate, the team identified blogs specifically directed toward African American and women readers. For example, *Jack & Jill Politics* purports to be “a black bourgeoisie perspective on U.S. politics.” *The Political Voices of Women* provides “opinion and commentary of over 500 women political bloggers.” Finally, due to the potential impact of the evangelical vote, we selected a blog specifically directed toward Christian readers. *Faith in Public Life* presents “a fresh take on faith and politics.” The research team considered many other blogs, but these three were chosen because preliminary analyses suggested that their posts would contain coverage of the presidential campaign rather than politics in general. The economy and foreign policy dominated the issue discussion across the blogs, and other issues varied.³⁵

Data Collection and Coder Training. The data analyzed in this study were collected between the dates of August 23, 2008 (the date that Biden, the first vice president candidate chosen, was announced), and November 4, 2008 (Election Day). The research team collected links daily from each of the ten blogs and collected a total of 9,470 entries. The number of daily postings varied from blog to blog with a range of from 3,546 entries posted from *The Daily Dish*, to 68 entries posted from *Faith in Public Life* (see Table 2).

Because of the difference in number of blog posts, the researchers coded three blogs in their entirety: *GOP.com*, *Faith in Public Life*, and *The*

TABLE 1
Blogs Included in Study

Politically Aligned Blogs

Barack Obama Campaign Site	http://my.barackobama.com
John McCain Campaign Site	https://www.johnmccain.com
The Democratic Party Website	http://democrats.org
The Republican Party Website	http://www.gop.com

Politically Non-aligned Blogs

Daily Kos - Liberal	http://www.dailykos.com
Michelle Malkin – Conservative	http://www.michellemalkin.com
The Daily Dish – Independent	http://andrewsullivan.theatlantic.com
Jack & Jill Politics – African American	http://www.jackandjillpolitics.com
The Political Voices of Women – Women	http://www.politicsanew.com
Faith in Public Life – Evangelical	http://blog.faithinpubliclife.com

Political Voices of Women. *Johnmccain.com* contained 92 entries in the blog section; however, immediately following Election Day, the blog section of the website either failed or was removed and rendered inaccessible to the public. Google's cache allowed researchers to recover 32 posts, which were all included in the sample. A random sampling of 230 postings from each blog was drawn from the population of the remaining 6 blogs using a random number generator. Because of issues such as duplication of posts, a final total of 1,699 posts was drawn from the 10 blogs. Posts coded as open threads (i.e., posts consisting entirely of random user comments) or news roundups (several different news stories from multiple sources) were eliminated. The research team eliminated 170 open threads and 66 news roundups, resulting in a total of 1,463 posts. Of these posts, 516 mentioned either Palin or Biden. Three graduate students coded all of the blog entries.

Measures

Unique Mention. Each post was first coded for the mention of a vice presidential candidate. Every individual mention of a candidate was recorded. For example, each time a "yes" was recorded in the vice presidential category and a candidate was identified, a tally would be made under the candidate's name. If a "both" was recorded, a tally would be made under both Palin's and Biden's name.

Positive and Negative Tone. The overall tone of the post for each candidate was coded by identifying whether the post was positive, negative, neutral, or if the candidate in question was not mentioned.³⁶ Coders were instructed to look for the presence of attacks (statements that criticize a candidate) when coding "negative" and to look for the presence of acclaims (utterances that are intended to enhance the reputation of the candidate) when coding "positive."

Male and Female Issues. We defined “male” issues as the economy, business, taxes, trade, employment/jobs, and foreign policy. We defined “female” issues as women’s rights, gender quotas, abortion, HIV/AIDS, violence against women, gay rights, women in elected office, education, health care, and the environment.³⁷ Each issue was coded using these guidelines. If a post contained multiple topics, each was coded.

Election Issue. The coders also recorded incidence of election issues using the following definitions: Issue stories focus mainly on substantive policy issues. They focus on the candidates’ competing issue proposals and/or give details about the issue being discussed. Coders recorded topics that were discussed extensively in each blog post into the following categories: abortion, campaign updates, economy, education, energy/environment, foreign policy, gays and lesbians, gun control, horserace/polls, minority issues, religion, social security, women’s issues, other, none.

Issues were originally coded into a list of twenty-three categories. However, some categories had very few incidents and were combined with other similar categories. Specifically, Afghanistan, Iraq, and terrorism/national security were combined into the foreign policy category; campaign advertising and campaign finance were combined into the campaign updates category; and jobs was combined with the economy category.

Personal Issue. The coders recorded the presence of personal issues and identified the candidate associated with each personal issue. The personal issues or topics coded were candidate campaign conduct, candidate strategies and tactics, candidate personal background, candidate professional background/qualifications. Candidate “friends and family” categories were combined into candidate “personal background” categories due to low frequency.

Reliability. To establish reliability, all three coders analyzed 171 randomly selected blog posts, representing 10% of the sample.³⁸ Scott’s *pi* was used to assess reliability across coders, with .70 the minimum acceptable level for vice presidential variables: vice presidential candidate mention ($\pi = .89$) and which vice presidential candidate mentioned ($\pi = .88$). All four tone variables were also above .70: positive ($\pi = .73$), negative ($\pi = .77$), neutral ($\pi = .78$), and positive and negative ($\pi = .84$). For election issues and personal issues, the value of *pi* for both variables was acceptable: election issues ($\pi = .71$) and personal issues ($\pi = .76$). The male and female issues variable was derived from the election issues category and has an acceptable Scott’s *pi* ($\pi = .71$).

Incidence of Unique Mentions. RQ1 focused on the incidence of unique mentions the vice presidential candidates received on the blogs during the 2008 presidential election. A one-way chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicates that a significant association is present in the number of unique mentions received. Palin received 403 unique mentions and Biden 199 out of 516 total posts, $\chi^2 (1, N = 1,032) = 164.29, p < .001$,

Results

TABLE 2
Unique Mentions of Candidates by Blog

	Number of Posts Coded	Biden	Palin
Obama	204	62	20
McCain	32	2	14
GOP	54	10	4
Democrats	122	10	13
Daily Kos	176	25	49
Michelle Malkin	218	20	64
Andrew Sullivan	220	9	79
Jack and Jill	192	27	69
Faith in Public Life	65	5	6
Politsanew	180	29	85
Total	1,463	199	403

$V = .40$. Table 2 presents a breakdown of the candidates' unique mentions by blog.

Personal Commentary and Coverage and Election Issues. RQ2a deals with the amount of personal commentary and coverage vice presidential candidates received. Of the 516 blog posts, 184 posts contained commentary and coverage of a personal issue/attribute in regards to a vice presidential candidate. Palin received more personal commentary and coverage (21.8%; $n = 155$) than Biden (4.1%; $n = 29$). A one-way chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicates a significant association is present, $\chi^2 (3, N = 184) = 27.49, p < .001, V = .38$. Palin received significantly more personal commentary and coverage in the campaign conduct category, $\chi^2 (1, N = 69) = 42.26, p < .001$; the background category, $\chi^2 (1, N = 35) = 16.46, p < .001$; and the professional qualifications category, $\chi^2 (1, N = 158) = 20.56, p < .001$.

RQ2b asked which personal issue/attribute was most discussed for each candidate. As Table 3 reveals, the personal issues/attributes most frequently associated with Palin were campaign conduct, professional qualifications, background, and strategies and tactics. The personal issues/attributes most frequently associated with Biden were strategies and tactics, campaign conduct, background, and professional qualifications.

RQ3a focused on election issue commentary and coverage on the blogs. Of the 516 blog posts, 173 contained commentary and coverage of an election issue. Palin received more election issue mentions ($n = 103$) than Biden ($n = 70$), but the difference was not significant.

Male and Female Issue Coverage. RQ3b concerned whether the blogs played to traditional gender stereotypes by emphasizing "male" issues for men candidates and "female" issues for women candidates during the 2008 presidential election. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicated no significant relationships between candidate and gendered issue coverage.

RQ4 focused on the tone of the unique mentions the vice presidential candidates received. As Table 4 reveals, Palin received mostly negative mentions (55.6%), with 28.5% neutral and 15.9% positive. Biden's

TABLE 3
Personal Issues/Attributes by Candidate

	Campaign Conduct	Strategies and Tactics	Personal Background	Professional Qualifications	Total
Palin	62	50	30	13	155
Biden	13	7	5	4	29
Total	75	57	35	17	184

χ^2 (3, $N = 184$) = 27.49, $p < .001$, $V = .38$.

mentions were more positive (46.6%), with 38.5% neutral and 14.9% negative. The relationship was significant with Palin receiving a disproportionate amount of negative unique mentions, χ^2 (2, $N = 640$) = 110.10, $p < .001$, $V = .41$.

Discussion

Previous literature has determined that women have consistently received less media attention than their male counterparts when running for high office.³⁹ This certainly was not true of blog commentary and coverage during the 2008 campaign. Sarah Palin received more than twice the amount of commentary and coverage than did her Democratic opponent, Joe Biden. In fact, so many posts about Palin appeared that the overall amount of commentary and coverage about her throughout the campaign nearly equaled the amount received by her running mate, John McCain. Palin's commentary and coverage accounted for roughly 40% of the total blog commentary and coverage garnered by the Republican ticket.

These findings suggest that the disadvantage women politicians have faced in obtaining amounts of media attention equal to male candidates may have diminished. However, an alternative conclusion may involve factors related both to the particulars of Palin as a unique candidate, the gendered aspects of Palin's candidacy, and the vetting process itself. Both as a *candidate* and as a *woman* candidate, Palin is something of an anomaly, for several reasons. First, she was a virtual unknown both within the Beltway and around the country. Whereas Biden was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1972 at age 29 and remained there until

TABLE 4
Tone by Candidate

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Biden	97	31	80
Palin	69	240	123
Total	166	271	203

χ^2 (2, $N = 640$) = 110.10, $p < .001$, $V = .41$

becoming vice president under Obama, Palin was a first-term governor of remote and sparsely populated Alaska. Second, unlike the traditional woman candidate, Palin is a staunch conservative, as her political record and her views on issues like abortion and same-sex marriage lie far to the right. Lastly, because Palin was new to the political sphere, journalists may have attempted to “dig up the dirt” on her life and career. Palin’s personal situation brought gender issues to the forefront as journalists discussed her \$150,000 campaign wardrobe allowance and her teenage daughter’s pregnancy. As a result, the media may have found her irresistible as a topic in the campaign.⁴⁰

While Palin certainly motivated the blogosphere to discuss her candidacy and the Republican ticket in general, the data initially seemed to support previous findings on the differences in personal coverage between men and women candidates. In this case, Palin received more than five times the amount of personal commentary and coverage as Biden. In addition to the significant amount of personal coverage Palin received *in general*, many of the posts coded under personal background and professional qualifications attacked Palin’s qualifications, focusing on her lack of experience beyond Alaska governor and Wasilla mayor, and the investigations that occurred under these administrations (i.e., “troopergate”). A closer look reveals that notable topics coded in the personal background category for Palin include her daughter’s pregnancy, the campaign wardrobe allowance, and her husband Todd’s driving under the influence conviction in 1986. However, what part of these findings can be attributed to Palin’s gender and what part can be explained by Palin’s unique candidacy? Again, given that Palin was a relatively unknown figure at the time of her nomination, it does not seem unusual that this type of personal coverage questioning her experience would arise. Secondly, because of Palin’s conservative stance, it is likely that bloggers would devote substantial attention to her daughter, regardless of gender.

Lastly, we turn to issue coverage. In this case, the blogs did *not* play to traditional gender stereotypes concerning issue coverage as Palin and Biden received comparable amounts of attention focusing on issue stance. This lack of difference between them in terms of blogs’ attention to their issue positions runs contrary to previous findings and is especially important because it shows that, in this case, bloggers’ personal discussion of Palin did not come at the expense of professional commentary and coverage of Palin. Additionally, though the economy, a traditionally “male” issue, dominated the agenda in the 2008 election, bloggers were equally as likely to discuss Palin’s stance on the economy as Biden’s. They were no more likely to discuss other “male” issues in regards to Biden than to Palin nor more “female” issues for Palin than Biden.

However, voter support for women candidates may be conditional, depending on which issues dominate the campaign agenda, regardless of media attention.⁴¹ In this election, three of the major issues (i.e., the economy, employment/jobs, and foreign policy) were male, while only one female issue (i.e., health care) was high on the media agenda. Previous research suggests that voters may have seen Palin as less competent for political office because a “male” issue (the economy) dominated the poli-

tical agenda during the 2008 election.⁴² Future research in this area should include a survey measuring voter attitudes toward a woman candidate the next time a male issue dominates the election agenda. A second suggestion is to examine the actual rhetoric of a candidate in addition to media coverage to see if candidate portrayal of gender stereotypes relates to media portrayal of gender stereotypes. In many ways, Palin embodied the notion of change in the McCain campaign. She ran as a traditional, conservative woman, emphasizing her communal traits and “womanly” roles of wife and mother. An analysis of Palin’s rhetoric is beyond the scope of this paper, but certainly future research in this area would be useful.

Conclusion

This study has contributed to our understanding of the role of gender stereotypes portrayed in the media in an American presidential election in two unique ways. First, the 2008 election provided the first instance in more than twenty years where a female candidate ran on a major party ticket. Therefore, unlike previous studies, the data are based on actual candidates rather than hypothetical candidates. Second, gender stereotypes were evaluated for the first time on political blogs. In sum, our findings support the idea that gender discrimination of political candidates in media coverage is still an issue, as Palin clearly received a disproportionate amount of blog attention to her personal life. However, one should consider this finding with caution as it is possible that Palin’s increased media attention overall, and especially to her personal life, was a result of both the vetting process and her unique candidacy and not a result of her gender. Furthermore, other findings suggest that gender discrimination in the media has diminished in commentary and coverage, relaying women’s issue stances on key issues in an environment where male issues were dominant.

NOTES

1. Thirty-four women have run for president since 1872, and eighty-six women have run as vice presidential candidates since 1884. However, only Democrat Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 and Republican Sarah Palin in 2008 were selected as candidates by mainstream and viable political parties.

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32. Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 150.

33. S. Robert Lichter, Richard E. Noyes, and Lynda Lee Kaid, "No News or Negative News: How the Networks Nixed the '96 Campaign," in *The Electronic Election: Perspectives on the 1996 Campaign Communica-*

tion, ed. Lynda Lee Kaid and Dianne G. Bystrom (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999), 3-14.

34. Authority is defined as the number of blogs linking to a website in the last six months. The three blogs selected were continuously ranked in the top fifty during the sample period. On April 9, 2009, these blogs continued to remain popular, with *Daily Kos* ranking at 17, *The Daily Dish* ranking at 32, and *MichelleMalkin* ranking at 45 of all blogs tracked.

35. To analyze the content of the blogs, we combined *my.barackobama.com* with *democrats.org*, *johnmccain.com* with *gop.com*, and the six non-aligned blogs. We eliminated issue topics that comprised fewer than 5% of the total posts. The results revealed that the economy was the most significant topic with 77% of the posts on the Republican blogs, 63% of the posts on the Democrat blogs, and 50% of the posts on the non-aligned blogs. Foreign policy was also a common issue (Republicans 22%, Democrats 13%, and non-aligned 14%). Health care was a common issue on the Democratic blog (13%), but was less common on non-aligned blogs (2%) and did not appear on the Republican blogs. Non-aligned blogs focused on the horse race frequently (16%), but that was less common on the Democratic blogs (4%) and non-existent on the Republican blogs. Religion and minority issues were commonly discussed on the non-aligned blogs due to the inclusion of *jackandjillpolitics.com* and *faithinpubliclife.com*.

36. Kahn, *The Political Consequences*.

37. Miki Caul Kittilson and Kim Fridkin, "Gender, Candidate Portrayals, and Election Campaigns: A Comparative Perspective," *Politics & Gender* (September 2008): 371-92.

38. Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacy, and Frederick L. Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1998).

39. Heldman, Carroll, and Olson, "'She Brought Only a Skirt.'"

40. Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism, "The Palin Phenomenon Drives Campaign Coverage," <http://www.journalism.org/node/12693> (accessed May 10, 2009).

41. Lawless, "Women, War, and Winning Elections."

42. Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).